

SIERRA NEVADA ALLIANCE FOR PEACE

Inyo and Mono Counties, California

P.O. Box 132, Bishop, CA 93514

NEWSLETTER

"Even if SDI works as well as US defense officials say it will, we will have built a

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leaky roof over a house with no walls." — Rear Admiral (Ret.) E.J. Carroll, Jr.

Editor: Mark Bagley

Star Wars vs. National Security

The Strategic Defense Initiative is the largest research program ever undertaken. Funding for it will continue as long as the public remains uninformed or apathetic. There are a number of strong arguments against SDI, any one of which are sufficient to drastically reduce current funding levels. Among these are:

- It will never provide protection for civilian populations as it was originally conceived.
- The technological requirements are not currently available and by the time they are developed much cheaper countermeasures will easily be deployed.
- Testing and early deployment of a partial SDI violates the 1972 ABM treaty.
- It will impede progress on other arms control treaties and nuclear weapons reductions.
- SDI, as currently envisioned, will decrease nuclear stability and is against our nations interest.
- SDI is and will continue to be a drain on our economy as funds are directed away from social programs or much needed research and development in the civilian sector.

A leaky system at best

SDI was proposed as a shield to protect the American public against incoming nuclear missiles. The high degree of initial popular support was an indicator of the concern people have over the possibility of nuclear war. It became apparent several years ago that the program the President was selling and the one the scientists were researching were very different. The originally conceived nuclear umbrella has been scaled back to an umbrella for our MX missiles, and a further reduced version capable of intercepting at best 30% of the incoming missiles is now being considered. If only 1% of the Soviet missiles reached their targets 35 to 55 million Americans would be killed. Even ardent proponents admit that 5-15% would reach their targets. And SDI is no protection at all from bombers, cruise missiles, low trajectory ballistic missiles, and terrorists. Any value of SDI must stem from its effects on deterrence and nuclear stability not on its ability to protect people from attack.

Technology and Countermeasures

Numerous panels and commissions to study the feasibility of Star Wars have concluded there are severe technological barriers to developing and deploying the originally envisioned SDI system. The directed energy components of the system would require scientific advancements several orders of magnitude beyond what is now known and the computer programs necessary to coordinate the system would likely suffer catastrophic failure should it ever be used.

The technology for countermeasures against SDI may be easily developed in several years and they are much less costly

to deploy. These include shortening the boost phase of ICBM's, swamping the system with decoys, shifting emphasis to cruise missiles, or simply building more ICBM's. All these are within easy reach of present day Soviet technology.

SDI and the ABM Treaty

Strategists in the 60's and 70's correctly assessed the importance of limiting defensive systems. If both countries choose to develop defensive systems, an ever-escalating race between new offensive and defensive systems would result. In order to deter war, each side must be capable of responding to a preemptive strike. The ABM Treaty grew out of this strategy by limiting the defensive systems which could be employed.

The current administration has moved back toward a war-fighting strategy and is engaged in developing nuclear arsenals to fight and win a nuclear war. This is insanity. Remaining within the constraints of the ABM Treaty protects the deterrent capabilities of both sides which are necessary to allow the reduction and elimination of our over-inflated nuclear arsenals.

SDI will impede progress on arms control treaties

The attempt to weaken the ABM Treaty in order to develop and deploy a partial SDI will certainly impede progress in reducing nuclear arsenals. Opponents of SDI correctly understand that it undermines deterrence by making retaliation less certain. The Soviets will not reduce the number of nuclear weapons they deploy at the same time we make their remaining ones less effective.

SDI will decrease stability

SDI would only be useful against a retaliatory strike by the Soviet Union. It would be useless against a full scale first strike, since in even the most optimistic assessments 5-15% of the Soviet weapons would reach their targets. In times of imminent nuclear crisis the Soviets would be pressured to launch their missiles first. A recent Los Alamos Lab Report concluded that the more successful a Star Wars system would be, the more instability it would generate in a crisis.

SDI drains money from civilian research

We are running huge deficits and our economic competitiveness is in decline, yet we continue to allow research funds to be siphoned from the civilian sector. Our economic competitiveness depends on adequate funds for basic and applied research. President-elect Bush will be faced with many tough choices on the budget crisis when he takes office. He could enhance our security and help trim the budget in one stroke by scaling back or eliminating SDI research.

LEGISLATIVE REPORT

President-elect Bush has been a strong supporter of the SDI program (Star Wars), the MX missile, nuclear testing, and higher defense spending. The arms control agenda of the new Bush administration remains unclear. Early indications point to an effort toward a Chemical Weapons Treaty, the Strategic Arms Reduction Treaty (START), and a Conventional Weapons Treaty although Bush has made no commitments. The likely appointment of John Tower as Secretary of Defense could mean a less friendly posture toward reducing nuclear arms.

Congress will likely play a crucial role in direct measures for arms control in the coming year. While our Eastern Sierra representatives remain unchanged after the November election, the Senate added a couple of democrats who are sympathetic to arms control and the House remains strongly in favor.

Where to Write or Call

Senator Alan Cranston -or-
Senator Pete Wilson
Senate Office Building
Washington, D.C. 20510

Hon. Bill Thomas (Inyo) -or-
Hon. Richard Lehman (Mono)
House Office Building
Washington, D.C. 20515



Announcing

"Carolling For Peace"

5:30 to 7:00 pm, Friday, Dec. 16

SNAP's Second Annual Christmas Gathering in Talmage (Academy Street) Park, Bishop

Join us in celebrating the holiday season in song. Let us gather to renew our commitment to working for peace.



Next SNAP Meeting: Dec. 4th

Place: The Scheidlinger's, 393 Mt. Tom Rd., Bishop
Call Carla or David at 873-8439 for directions or info
Time: 6:30 pm to about 8:30 pm

Program: "STAR WARS: A SEARCH FOR SECURITY"

A half-hour video showing followed by a group discussion. This program takes a critical look at Pres. Reagan's SDI. Answers most asked questions and examines alternatives to reducing the danger of nuclear war

Children are welcome at our meetings. Child care is provided by David Scheidlinger for pre-schoolers on up - infants are your responsibility.

Next Regular Meeting - Feb. 5th

See January newsletter for program. There will be no December newsletter

Steering Committee Meeting - Feb. 5th Sunday, 6:00 pm - Dinner Provided

Place: 16 Dixon Lane., Bishop
Call 873-6445 for directions or info

Topics of discussion include outlining our events for 1989 (do we still want regular monthly meetings?), program for February meeting, help needed on newsletter, and SNAP finances. The Steering Committee is composed of those people who are interested enough to get involved. Everyone is welcome. We need more active interest.

From the Editor

Balloon Rally—Thanks to all who helped in putting on the balloon rally, especially to our coordinator Robert Atlee and to Molly Starbuck for her generous contributions. It was a great success with hundreds of people participating. A special thanks to the Eastern Sierra Country Dance Community for putting on a fine benefit dance.

Thank you to this month's contributors and the folks who helped to get this out: Irene Yamashita, Bob & Kerry Jellison, Marion Helling, and Jeff Cook.

Sierra Nevada Alliance for Peace
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